



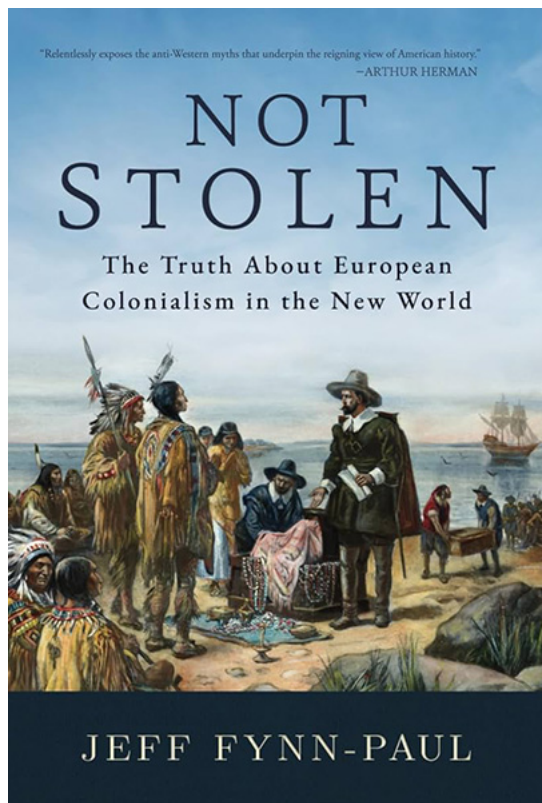
TAP NEWS

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Did We Steal America from the Indians?

Sat 2:16 pm +01:00, 4 Nov 2023 6

posted by pete fairhurst 2



Very thought provoking article. Short answer: not really

Jeff Fynn-Paul, *Not Stolen: The Truth About European Colonialism in the New World*, Bombardier Books, 2023, 386 pp., \$17.26 (paper)

The Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada, opens every public lecture with this:

In the spirit of respect and reconciliation, we acknowledge that Perimeter Institute is located upon lands that have been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. In particular we acknowledge the Haldimand Tract. We thank the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples for hosting us on their land.

There is something malodorous here. "Inhabited by Indigenous peoples" from the beginning of what? From the time of the arrival in North America of these "Indigenous peoples," who were not, in fact, indigenous to the continent? Had the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples always possessed the land? Or did it change hands over time, well before the arrival of the White Man? If it did change hands, under what circumstances? Was the land sold by earlier indigenous peoples to the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples, or was it conquered or "stolen" by them? How did the White Man acquire it? Was it "stolen," or bought fair and square?

It would be nice to know the answers to such questions — and others. Every so often I read a book with the aim of acquiring intellectual ammunition to use against leftists, just in case I get into an argument with one (something

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which, in all honesty, I try to avoid). *Not Stolen* belongs to this category of book. Its author is Jeff Fynn-Paul, Ph.D., a lecturer in history at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

His book promises, in 386 pages, to provide us with all the intellectual ammunition we need to counter leftist claims about how we “non-indigenous peoples” stole all the land from the “indigenous peoples” and tried to genocide them. The book delivers on this promise — up to a point. It is not without problems.

Scholarship on European colonialism in the New World is now, of course, completely dominated by the Left. Prof. Fynn-Paul writes that such scholarship is animated by a worldview that “is so rabidly anti-white, anti-male, and anti-European that it challenges the idea of human progress itself.” He correctly attributes a kind of “Western exceptionalism” to leftist historians, in that they assume that “Western colonies and colonists were worse than others, that Western ideologies were more cruel than others, and that Western economies were more brutal than others.”

In fact, by the time Europeans began enslaving blacks in the 16th century, Muslims had already enslaved millions over the course of nearly a thousand years. And they were particularly brutal about it: Unlike Europeans, the Arabs routinely castrated their male slaves. Yet, for the Left, Western slavery was exceptionally and uniquely bad. They also apparently think that it is the only slavery anybody needs to hear about.

However, it is not just the assumptions or prejudices of leftist scholars that are bad, it is also their methodology. They willfully overestimate populations and death tolls, cherry-pick evidence, suppress inconvenient facts, and take quotations out of context. The fraud is on such a large scale, and often so childishly clumsy, it is difficult to believe that those committing it are unaware of what they are doing. It would be too charitable to say that the resulting scholarship appeals to those already committed to a certain viewpoint; actually, it seems primarily to appeal to those unaccustomed to asking any questions about what they are told.

The heroes in this field include men like Ward Churchill, the highly influential author of such works as *Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* and *Indians Are Us?: Culture and Genocide in Native North America*. In 2007, Mr. Churchill was fired from the faculty of the University of Colorado Boulder for “research misconduct” (it takes some *very* serious “research misconduct,” we should note, to motivate a university to fire a fashionable, tenured leftist).

There are academic historians working in this field who have far more credibility than Mr. Churchill. The trouble, however, is that they often uncritically repeat the claims and rhetoric of Mr. Churchill and others like him. It has now become *de rigueur* for academics writing about Indians and settlers to employ the language of “stolen land” and “genocide,” even in otherwise objective histories.

The absence of such tropes might make publication difficult. The situation is not unlike that faced by those wishing to write objective histories of the Third Reich, who are expected ritually to condemn Hitler and the Nazis in at least one point in the text, the earlier the better. No such requirement applies, of course, to histories of the Soviet Union or Communist China.

The attitude of leftist historians toward the Indians, who they claim they are defending, is also predictably condescending. This seems always to be the case with whomever the Left takes up as a *cause célèbre*. Essentially, the Left portrays Indians as peaceful, happy-go-lucky flower children, living in harmony with nature and sharing all things. In every respect, this view is false to the point of absurdity.

Indians were extraordinarily violent and ethnocentric people, who were busy “genociding” each other long before Europeans allegedly tried it on them. They were also not exactly responsible stewards of the environment; they overkilled North American megafauna to the point of extinction long before Europeans arrived. The myth that they were primitive communists was exploded all the way back in 1881, when D.W. Bushyhead, chief of the Cherokee nation, wrote to Congress saying that “The statements made to you that we, or any of the Indians, are communists and hold property in common are entirely erroneous.”

Nor were the Indians the arch-traditionalists that, ironically, leftist historians have portrayed them as (tradition, you see, is fine so long as it is not practiced by white people). The Indian way of life evolved over time. Prof. Fynn-Paul notes that leftist accounts of Indians clinging for dear life to their “Indigenous traditions” in the face of the European presence are “ironically Eurocentric in that [they] assume that Indian life never evolved in the absence of contact with Europeans.”

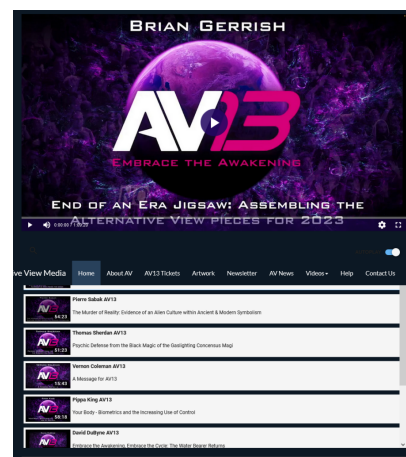
Early American settlers seemed to have had a much higher opinion of the Indians than modern leftists. The record of European treatment of the Indians is a very spotty one, as we shall see, but in case after case, one is struck by the fact that many Europeans directed an awful lot of good will toward Indians. Europeans were disposed, at least initially, to recognize their virtues, to treat them with respect, and to trade with them peaceably. At least part of this good will was the result of Christian and Enlightenment universalism.

Prof. Fynn-Paul correctly notes that Europe invented “the modern discourse on human rights.” He also correctly states that “We simply do not find such a plethora of humanitarian sentiment in most traditional cultures, where individual human rights are normally subsumed under the rights of powerful men, institutions, and family honor.”

It is ironic that the Left condemns Western civilization in terms of theories that are themselves the products of that civilization. And while the West has not always practiced what it has preached, it has a far better record on “human rights” than any other civilization.

Let us consider what the Indians were really like. The most advanced Indian civilizations in the New World were those in Mexico and Central America. However, leftist historians have made absurd claims on behalf of these people, asserting, for example, that they were “more advanced” than European civilization of the same period. The reality is that the civilizations of the Aztecs and the Incas were roughly analogous in their level of achievement to the Mesopotamian cultures of around 3,000 BC.

In other words, the most advanced societies of the New World were about 4,500 years behind Europe — to say nothing of China, the Arab world, and India. The Aztecs had invented the wheel, but by the time of the Spanish



A Big Thank You

A big thank you to those of you who attended the AV13 Conference in Milton Keynes. It was fantastic to finally get back together and welcome old friends and newcomers to a very enjoyable and memorable event. We are already already working on the next AV events.

If you didn't make it to AV13 we now have the presentations up on the AV website.

Regards and best wishes.

The AV Team.

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conquest used it only for children's toys. Of all the Indian peoples of the New World, only the Aztecs had developed a pictographic alphabet and system of writing when Europeans appeared on their shores.

In contrast to the Aztecs, when Europeans arrived in the New World, the Indian peoples north of Mexico were in a state of civilization very much like that of the Fertile Crescent around 10,000 to 7,000 BC. They were thousands of years behind the Aztecs, with whom they had very little contact.

Prof. Fynn-Paul describes relations between the various Indian tribes as “a Hobbesian war of all against all.” Indians routinely described their neighbors in terms that translate as “devils,” “less than human,” and “worthy of extermination.” They lived in a world that was, as Prof. Fynn-Paul puts it, “intensely local and intensely tribal.” There is absolutely no evidence that they identified with each other in racial terms.

It was very common, when one tribe conquered another, to slaughter all the men and take the women and children as slaves. Infants were often killed. Slavery was widely practiced by Indian tribes. During the 17th century, records indicate that only a few hundred Indians were taken as slaves from New England. Within the same period, Indians enslaved tens of thousands of other Indians.

It is not for nothing that Indians were called “savages.” The Aztecs butchered more than 20,000 human beings a year, cutting their still-beating hearts out of their bodies in the belief that this was what kept the sun shining. Apparently, this practice was sanctioned by “Aztec philosophy.” Cannibalism is well documented among some Indian tribes. The Natchez Indians of Mississippi practiced child sacrifice.

Indians were also notoriously enthusiastic about torture, to which they devoted considerable energy and imagination (possibly even more than the Chinese). Many eyewitness accounts of Indian torture sessions have survived. They are difficult to forget, as much as one would like to.

So, readers may ask, the Indians may not have been saints, but does that justify trying to exterminate them? Certainly not, but the fact is that the only people who tried to exterminate Indians were other Indians. Prof. Fynn-Paul makes it abundantly clear that Indians pursued a policy of genocide against rival tribes.

He notes that the English, French, and Spanish “went to great lengths to curtail [this violence] over the centuries, saving hundreds of thousands of Indian lives.” In a line that would no doubt send leftists into paroxysms of rage, he remarks that “If anyone in seventeenth-century America can be considered genocidal, it should be the Iroquois, rather than the French or English.”

One trick used by leftist historians to argue that Europeans committed genocide against is to begin by grossly overestimating the Indian population in certain areas, prior to the arrival of the White Man. The sparse Indian population of those areas in later times is then used to argue that there must have been genocide. Prof. Fynn-Paul shows that in many cases, overestimates of Indian population at the time of European settlement have reached absurd extremes — sometimes by as much as 1,000 percent.

One simple argument against claims of genocide is that tens of millions of mestizos and Amerindians are alive today, living exactly where their ancestors lived in the 16th century. Prof. Fynn-Paul argues, further, that “the fact that the US Indian population has remained steady proportional to the overall US population since 1810, despite massive immigration from Europe in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a simple and clear refutation [of the charge of genocide].”

But isn't it the case that Europeans massacred many of the Indians? Haven't we all heard such tales? Yes and no, as it turns out. First of all, European relations with the Indians tended to alternate between periods of peace and periods of war. And, yes, there were massacres — by both sides against the other. However, Europeans frequently allied themselves with one Indian tribe against another. Our Indian allies, under such circumstances, were only too happy to kill as many of the opposing tribe as they could. In many cases, they were settling old scores. It is impossible for anyone at this point to know who did the majority of the killing in these cases — the colonists or their Indian accomplices.

Prof. Fynn-Paul asks, “why does the historical record provide so many examples of Indians voluntarily wandering into English and Dutch camps, and even climbing on board ships,” if today's leftists are correct about the rapacity with which Europeans went about trying to murder and enslave them?

It is estimated that the total number of North American Indians massacred by Europeans during the entire 500-year period of colonization was fewer than 10,000. This was out of an indigenous population estimated to have been a little more than a million. It is highly likely that Indians massacred considerably more than 10,000 Europeans. And it is certainly true that during the same period Indians massacred *far* more of each other.

What about the Trail of Tears? This refers to the forced resettlement of several Indian tribes from the Southeastern US to newly designated Indian territory west of the Mississippi. The took place from 1830 to 1850 and was occasioned by the discovery of gold in Georgia. The white man wanted the gold and decided to renege on his promise to respect the Indians' right to occupy their ancestral lands. This was a shameful episode in American history — but here, too, the Left manages to get everything wrong.

Leftist historians offer this as typical of the way whites treated Indians. They either ignore or downplay how much the Trail of Tears divided white America. Outraged citizens launched massive petition drives against the government's policy. Prof. Fynn-Paul writes that “The strength of antiremoval forces stunned Martin Van Buren who, writing of the events over twenty years later, portrayed the government's side as besieged from all quarters and stated flatly that ‘a more persevering opposition to a public measure had scarcely ever been made.’”

In the end, the US Supreme Court ruled against the policy — but President Andrew Jackson ignored the Court and went ahead with it. Some Indians voluntarily resettled in the West (and the government offered them incentives to do so). Others were forcibly marched for hundreds of miles, hence “Trail of Tears.” However, the Left exaggerates the death toll. The total number of deaths was around 3,000, or about 5 percent. Most of these deaths were due to cold, exposure, and disease.

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Did we steal the Indians' land? Yes and no. First, a plausible case can be made that the forcible relocation of the Indians during the Trail of Tears was theft of land. We had originally agreed that the land was theirs and that we would respect their right to it. But when we discovered that the land was much more valuable than we had thought, Indian property rights suddenly meant little — in fact, nothing. But this was the exception and not the rule. In the vast majority of cases, land settled by Europeans was purchased from Indians, who willingly sold it.

But didn't the settlers cheat the Indians, offering them worthless objects in exchange for their land? In fact, the settlers gave the Indians goods that they genuinely valued, most of which had some practical use. In other words, contrary to what you may have heard, it wasn't all just sacks of colorful glass beads. Here again we see the condescension of the Left, portraying the Indians as easily bamboozled by the white man's offer of glittering but worthless baubles. In fact, the Indians tended to be canny businessmen, and sometimes drove hard bargains.

North of Mexico, about 90 percent of the land remained in Indian hands for the first 300 years after Europeans arrived in the New World. Vast swaths of North America remained completely unoccupied by white people. For centuries, most Indians had little or no contact with Europeans. During that period, most Indians who were forced off their land were victims of other Indians.

Indeed, the "stolen land" claim rests on the assumption that Indians displaced from their land by Europeans had occupied that land in perpetuity. The truth is that the Indians displaced by Europeans had generally slaughtered the previous group of Indians — who had, in turn, had slaughtered an earlier group.

This is why groveling "acknowledgements" such as the one made by the Perimeter Institute are so silly. However, if one goes a step further and argues that we merely did to the Indians what they'd already done to each other, one commits yet another fallacy. In fact, we were usually *much* more humane.

As I noted, the book has problems, and these are not insignificant. Prof. Fynn-Paul includes an interesting discussion of the Indian policies of various American presidents. We read, for example, that Jefferson wrote that in dealing with the Indians it was "essential to cultivate their love." Imagine my shock, however, when I came to the sub-section titled "The Humanity and Bravery of Lincoln."

Is this the same Lincoln who suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* (without consent of Congress, as required by the Constitution)? Is this the same Lincoln who imprisoned, without trial, hundreds of newspapermen who criticized his policies? Is Prof. Fynn-Paul's "humane" Lincoln the same one who had his generals attack Southern cities full of women and children and burn them to the ground?

The professor asserts that Lincoln's policies toward the Indians showed "no sign of 'racism,' but [treated] Indian warriors with as much humanity as was later shown to Confederate POWs." Again, we must ask: Is this the same Lincoln who allowed his generals to use hundreds of Confederate POWs as human shields, placing them in a stockade directly in front of a Yankee fort at Charleston, forcing Confederate troops to fire on their own men? This is only one of many examples of Yankee mistreatment of Confederate POWs. To be sure, there were abuses on both sides. To credit either side with displaying "humanity" demonstrates ignorance of the facts.

However, by far the most problematic part of *Not Stolen* is Prof. Fynn-Paul's bizarre attempt to argue that early-modern Europeans were innocent of the charge of "racism." Incredibly, the professor writes early on in his book, "The scholarly consensus still holds that Europeans were in fact *not* racist in the modern sense of believing some races to be distinct or essentially inferior, until the later nineteenth century."

European awareness of racial identity dates back to the ancient world. Despite the tribalism of the Greeks, during the Persian invasion of 480–479 BC, the Athenians promised their Spartan allies that they would never abandon their fellow Greeks, saying that "we are one in blood and one in language, and we worship the same gods." Plato remarked that "the Hellenic race [*genos*] is united by ties of blood and friendship."

Aristotle certainly saw the Persians as belonging to a race distinct from, and inferior to, the Greeks. He urged his student Alexander the Great to treat the Persians "like plants and animals." Many ancient authors took note of racial differences, particularly with respect to skin and hair color.

The Pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes observed that different peoples made their gods look like them: "The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and dark, Thracians that theirs are grey-eyed and red-haired." Greek and Roman descriptions of blacks often make for amusing reading and give ample evidence that the ancients believed "some races to be distinct or essentially inferior."

Note how Prof. Fynn-Paul runs those two items together: a racist is someone who believes "some races to be distinct or essentially inferior." So, one can be a "racist" simply by believing that races are distinct. This is a position usually associated with the Left, but apparently Prof. Fynn-Paul is on board. Part of his case for the late blossoming of European racism hinges on noting that it was only rather recently that we started calling ourselves "white." But this is sleight of hand: From the fact that we were not calling ourselves "white" until the 18th century, it does not follow that we had no concept of racial distinctness!

Similar sleight of hand is at work in Prof. Fynn-Paul's statement that "before Charles Darwin published his work on evolution in 1859, it was not really possible to conceive of humans as having evolved in distinct genetic lines in the way we now take for granted." While it is true that pre-moderns had no scientific concept of genetics, it is certainly false to suggest that they had not noticed that racial characteristics are heritable, and that, left to their own devices, races reproduce their own kind.

Historian Benjamin Isaac noted in his 2004 book *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* that "There is a long-standing tradition in Greek and Latin literature of idealizing the concepts of unmixed origin, pure lineage, and autochthony." The ancients also did not fail to notice that different regions seemed to cause different racial characteristics to evolve. Hippocrates, for example, remarked of the Scythians that "it is the cold which burns their white skin and turns it ruddy." (Note the words "white skin.")

Prof. Fynn-Paul states that the European "obsession with collecting and categorizing everything under the sun" led to the division of humanity into "black," "red," "yellow," and "white" races. Later, Europeans noticed that racial groups have distinctive skull shapes, and categorized those groups accordingly. Prof. Fynn-Paul then asserts that "this led

to the pseudoscience of physiognomy — the idea that you can judge a person's character from the way they look." Notice, once more, the sleight of hand: The fact that races have distinct skull shapes is immediately coupled with a mention of the "pseudoscience" of physiognomy (not so pseudoscience, by the way). The unfocussed reader will draw the conclusion that the categorization of racial skull shapes is also pseudoscience.

Predictably, Prof. Fynn-Paul wastes no time in trotting out the Nazis, just to let us know where disagreeing with him might lead. After seeming to endorse Darwin's conception of human races as evolving "in distinct genetic lines," this professional historian then draws on the Hollywood version of history: "It was left to the Nazis to take this genetic-racist idea to its extreme, with their fantasy of dominating every other 'inferior' race."

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Prof. Fynn-Paul goes on to state that "almost everything that led the Nazis to consider themselves 'Aryan' or 'Caucasian' was proven to be a late nineteenth century fantasy." One expects only the Far Left in the academy to take the position that the existence of an "Aryan race" was a fantasy. In fact, the existence of an Aryan or Indo-European people is beyond dispute, and the Germanic tribes are certainly numbered among them, regardless of what inaccurate or grandiose claims the Nazis may have made about Aryans.

Sadly, *Not Stolen* serves to show that making arguments in bad faith is not a vice confined to the Left. Prof. Fynn-Paul's attempt to acquit pre-19th-century whites of "racism" is the low point of the book, and causes the reader ever-so-slightly to distrust what follows. But, setting this criticism aside, does *Not Stolen* acquit whites of mistreating the Indians? No.

Not Stolen does burst some outright myths about our treatment of the Indians, but what the author mainly does, over and over, is simply revise the numbers downward. Leftists have grossly exaggerated massacre and enslavement. Nevertheless, it remains true that we massacred and enslaved Indians. They also massacred us, of course, but we can't say we didn't provoke them.

I don't take great solace in learning that the death toll of the Trail of Tears wasn't 15,000 or more, as claimed by some, but only 3,000. It was still an utterly shameful episode in American history. Nor do I take solace in learning that only some of the land was stolen from the Indians, not all. Prof. Fynn-Paul succeeds in showing that white treatment of the Indians was decidedly mixed. It's true that whites often treated the Indians with good will and did much to help them. But we were also capable of treating them unjustly, and with genuine brutality. *Not Stolen* succeeded in reminding me that our treatment of the Indians was, on balance, pretty bad.

We should acknowledge this. But . . . what then? Since we are not going to give the land back, what purpose is served by cringey "land acknowledgements," aside from letting affluent white liberals signal their virtue? Indians have now been very handsomely compensated for the wrong done to them. Today, the US government spends more than \$20 billion a year on the descendants of Indians wronged by our ancestors, which works out to about \$20,000 per Indian per year. At this point, we owe them nothing.

Some years ago, I got into a discussion about our treatment of "indigenous peoples" with a white, liberal academic. He kept harping on our injustices against the Indians, as if acknowledging this was going to change something. I agreed with him that we had committed abuses, but then, much to his consternation, I quoted another Pre-Socratic, Heraclitus: "War is father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as humans; some he makes slaves, others free." The Indians themselves understood this far better than we do.

Not Stolen is clearly written, but is badly footnoted. In some important cases, we must simply take Prof. Fynn-Paul's word for things, as he gives no way to check his claims.

It's also distressing that bad English usage is now creeping into the works even of university professors. Someone needs to tell Prof. Fynn-Paul what "normative" means — a word he misuses throughout the book. At one point, he tells us that "mixed-race marriages were normative beyond the frontier." What he means is that they were "normal." Saying they were "normative" means that society considered them to be obligatory, or the norm. Someone also should tell the professor that "cliché" and "fraught" are not adjectives.

The book lacks an index. Most surprising, there is no information about the author. I had to go online to find out who he is.

Despite these reservations, *Not Stolen* can be a useful resource — if approached with caution. There is much to be learned here — much intellectual ammunition for the next Thanksgiving dinner at which some liberal relative lectures us about our treatment of "Indigenous peoples."

Source: <https://www.unz.com/article/did-we-steal-america-from-the-indians/>



Post Views: 19

6 Responses to "Did We Steal America from the Indians?"



ian says:

4 Nov 2023 7:50 PM

I read Dee Brown's *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*, many years ago. It satisfied my resentment towards authority, and allowed me to like Indians.

Now I'm not so sure. The wild Scots, Irish, Welsh, and English were dispossessed too. I put English last for badness. We, ie our predecessors who lived freely on land nobody owned, were put off it, and it was owned by someone with a bigger stick, with two nails in it. It is wrong, but was always thus.

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pete fairhurst 2 says:

4 Nov 2023 8:08 PM

Same for me Ian, i only became aware of the Enclosures and the Clearances later on in life

Wales and Ireland were colonised. I was always told that the Irish were thick bog trotters. It was only when I visited Eire a few years ago that I realised just how sophisticated their early culture was. Cork was a major continental trading city in 1000 AD. When the English were still wearing woad

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ian says:

4 Nov 2023 8:17 PM

Aye Pete, Ireland is a horror story on it's own. From Good King Billy to the starving to death of the population because their potatoes failed. They grew grain crops and had animals too, but they were shipped to England. Trevallions corn guarded by British soldiers for export to Britain, while the Irish died. Trevallion is a reference to the song , The Fields of Atherhry.

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REPLY



ian says:

4 Nov 2023 8:20 PM

Ps, my spelling of names may be wrong, indeed are wrong.

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pete fairhurst 2 says:

4 Nov 2023 8:26 PM

Ha ha! Gaelic spelling is always incomprehensible to me anyway

Thomas Sheridan has written a great book about the Irish Druids, "The Druid Code". Another massive eye opener about Irish culture for me

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ian says:

4 Nov 2023 8:49 PM

I'll try to get it Pete thanks.

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